

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Compton's Cafeteria **DRAFT**

Other names/site number: Gene Compton's Cafeteria

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 101-121 Taylor Street

City or town: San Francisco State: CA County: San Francisco

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

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Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____1_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
_____1_____	_____0_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/restaurant

DOMESTIC/hotel

COMMERCE/department store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/institutional housing

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19 CENTURY AND 20 CENTURY REVIVALS

Italian Renaissance

Beaux Arts

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Brick, stucco

Roof: Composite

Other: Metal (windows and fire escape)

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Built in 1908 and designed by architect Abram Edelman, 101-121 Taylor Street, San Francisco is an Italian Renaissance Revival style, 34,500 square foot, four-story, rectangular residential lodging house. The building is in the commercial center of the Tenderloin District, attached to the building located to the west. Gene Compton's Cafeteria existed on the ground floor in the southeast corner of the building.

The building has a flat composite roof, is constructed of brick, and sits on a concrete foundation. The walls have simple stonework with Beaux Arts-influenced decorative elements around the windows and cornice. Keeping in line with the Italian Renaissance Revival architectural style, which looked to and modeled earlier periods of Italian architecture, this building has a mostly symmetrical façade with a smaller row of windows on the top story. Compton's Cafeteria is in good condition and retains a high amount of historic integrity.

Narrative Description

Southern Elevation

The south-facing façade is one of the two visible walls of the property from the street. There are seven rows of double-hung windows with a molded border and stone sill on the top three stories. The walls are clad in masonry stucco. Rectangle moldings outline the spaces between each window

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row. Within each mold is an elaborate oval cartouche. The longer window's cartouche is towards the top of the molds. Between each second and third-story window is another rectangle of molding with a boss in the center. The third-story windows are decorated with ornamented keystones that contain detailed scroll ornamentation on either side. The fire escape covers the sixth window from the left.

From left to right, the first floor has two grouped 6x5 casement windows attached to a 3x6 paned fire door, two groupings of two 4x5 casement windows, and a grouping of one 5x4 and two 5x5 casement windows. Each of the 5x4 windows has a small sliding window above it.

Eastern Elevation

The east-facing façade is the other visible wall of the property. The ornamental elements are the same as the southern façade, but there are eleven rows of windows instead of seven. The fire escape covers the seventh window from the left. The first floor, from left to right, has a glass-paned door connected to a grouping of a 4x5, 5x5, and 5x4 casement windows; two grouped 5x5 casement windows, a slightly recessed main entrance with an awning, 4x5 casement window, 7x5 casement window, and two grouped 7x5 casement windows. The 5x4 window has a small sliding window above it.

North and West Elevations

The north and west sides of the building are not accessible by the public and are only accessible by going through the building. The walls are brick with seven rows of double-hung windows, and no decorative elements were added.

Other Features

There is an ovolo cornice molding with a plain frieze. Three separate string courses exist on the structure under the second-floor window (ovolo molding), under the fourth-floor window (simple molding with a zig-zag-like band underneath, and above the fourth-floor window (wide feather band with a smaller rope and feather band underneath).

Alterations

Compton's Cafeteria has undergone several alterations since its construction in 1908, but most are located in the interior. The storefront that once held the restaurant's main entrance no longer has a cutout entrance and now holds several of the newer casement windows used by housing services located on the stories above. This adjustment impacts the historical integrity, but since it is not recognized for its architectural significance, it is not a crucial part of the designation. Aluminum windows replaced the original windows, and the more elaborate portion of the cornice was removed.

Since 1990, the interior has been completely altered, adding twenty-two new bathrooms, renovating the dorms, and demolishing any no-bearing walls in the former storefront space. In 2000, a new awning was added to the eastern side of the building. A mural, commissioned by the former Oshun Center, was added to the southeast corner of the building in 2002. It depicts the spirit goddess Oshun reigning over the world's love, intimacy, beauty, wealth, and diplomacy. The

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goddess comes from several religions and spiritualities found in West Africa, Latin America, Haiti, and Cuba.¹ In 2003 and 2010, the property was reroofed, but the roof remains flat, retaining its historic integrity.

Integrity

Compton's Cafeteria retains its overall identity with a high amount of historic integrity. The building remains in its original location. Compton's Cafeteria additionally retains most design aspects, with few alterations to the exterior. Constructed as an irregular rectangle, incorporating beaux arts-style moldings and motifs, the building still expresses the original design elements of Edelman's plan, reflecting the aesthetics and historical functions of the period of significance.

The setting of the resource also remains intact. Initially constructed in the mostly rebuilt community of the Tenderloin district, Compton's Cafeteria remains an integral piece of the neighborhood's history and historical themes. This resource is surrounded by other similarly sized and dated buildings with similar historical functions, such as another lodging building to the west. Located within the urban background of San Francisco, its setting reflects the integrity of the time of the 1966 riot.

The materials used in the construction of the building are mostly original, though the ground-floor façades were redesigned without the storefront after the period of significance. New siding and windows were added to the level, but they use similar materials. The windows on the upper levels were changed to aluminum. While this affects the historic integrity, they are not essential to the building's significance. The roof was redone several times, but it remains flat and uses similar materials. The traditional masonry stucco siding and ornamental molded plaster elements are original to the 1966 period of significance. The integrity of the workmanship that crafted Compton's Cafeteria is represented in the three top stories. The aesthetic principles of the Italian Renaissance revival style and the aesthetic principles of the Beaux-Arts decorative elements remain evident.

The most defining aspect of integrity for listing Compton's Cafeteria, feeling, is also preserved. The property is surrounded by various intact, only slightly altered living spaces, restaurants, and other storefronts. The area still represents the coming and goings of apartment or dorm dwellers and the active street life of those in the neighborhood. The absence of the restaurant storefront impacts Compton's Cafeteria's integrity of association. Still, the building otherwise appears as it

¹ George Olusola Ajiabde, "Negotiating Performance: Osun in the Verbal and Visual Metaphors," *Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers* (October 2005): 5, https://web.archive.org/web/20110823192758/http://opus.ub.uni-bayreuth.de/volltexte/2005/188/pdf/WP_N_4_Negotiating_Performance.pdf.

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did during the riot and is recognizable to passersby aware of the event. Thus, the building retains sufficient integrity to illustrate the significant themes represented.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

- LGBTQ HISTORY

- CIVIL RIGHTS

Period of Significance

1966

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Edelman, Abram (Abraham)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Compton's Cafeteria is significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History for its association with the landmark incident of collective resistance against police oppression that targeted members of the transgender and gender-variant community. Today, the Compton's Cafeteria riot is remembered as a turning point towards militant resistance in the LGBTQ, and particularly transgender, community. The period of significance for Compton's Cafeteria is 1966, the year the conflict began in the dining space. The property is significant at the national level because of its influence on the future political and social representation of transgender and gender-variant people within the United States.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

CRITERION A: SOCIAL HISTORY: CREATING SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND MOVEMENTS; SHAPING THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Establishing the Tenderloin as a Transgender District

Around the turn into the twentieth century, the character of the Tenderloin district, known previously as part of St. Ann's Valley, changed due to what is known as the "shifting zone of prostitution."² San Francisco's new commercial center, catering to the elite with luxury hotels and growing business ventures, pushed into former areas of prostitution. Sex workers were then driven west into St. Ann's Valley. American Journalist, Herbert Asbury, wrote of "a small colony of prostitutes [that] succeeded in gaining a foothold" in the area, followed by a string of new single occupancy hotels and nighttime entertainment venues near Market Street.³ This was a direct result of the city's sex industry displacement.

The presence of such establishments grew exponentially with the changing built environment that resulted from new construction efforts after the 1906 earthquake⁴ Much of this new construction catered primarily to working-class or otherwise marginalized groups. The building at 101-121 Taylor Street is one of those such buildings. This structure, designed by Abram Edelman in 1908, served as low-cost rooming for the changing demographic of St. Anne's Valley.⁵ It had no lobby or dining room, with fifty bathrooms for the 115 rooms it rented out.⁶ Under its first name, Young

² Neil L. Shumsky and Larry M. Springer, "San Francisco's Zone of Prostitution, 1880-1934," *Journal of Historical Geography* 7, no.1 (January 1981): 71-89, [https://doi-org.proxy.lib.csus.edu/10.1016/0305-7488\(81\)90085-2](https://doi-org.proxy.lib.csus.edu/10.1016/0305-7488(81)90085-2).

³ Herbert Asbury, *The Barbary Coast: An Informal History of the San Francisco Underworld* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1933), 234-235.

⁴ Shumsky and Springer, "San Francisco's Zone of Prostitution," 77-82.

⁵ "Compton's Cafeteria," *Public Art and Architecture from Around the World*, accessed March 25, 2022, <https://www.artandarchitecture-sf.com/comptons-cafeteria.html>.

⁶ Michael R. Corbett and Anne Bloomfield, "Upper Tenderloin District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1978), Section 8.

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Hotel, the building served many people of low income, including a high percentage of Jewish residents. Several advertisements for Jewish businesses in the building appeared in newspapers as well as the Jewish market, Mindy's Kosher-Korner, which occupied the ground-floor corner store before Compton's Cafeteria.⁷ A speakeasy also likely occupied the basement during the prohibition era.⁸ Although the name of the hotel and storefront businesses may have changed several times, this customer base continued and expanded to include a wider range of minorities throughout the majority of the 20th century.⁹

Within the first few years of the building's establishment, the area became known as the new Uptown Tenderloin. The 'tenderloin' nickname has historically been reserved for neighborhoods with recent elevated levels of criminal behavior and sex working centers.¹⁰ It was this part of the city that was considered the containment zone for future police-enforced segregation from the more affluent areas.¹¹ The practice of law enforcement pushing the presence of what they considered "problem bodies," such as transgender, disabled, or mentally ill individuals, into the Tenderloin kept them separate from those they saw as visually "able-bodied" who were widely accepted within society.¹² This was done through the criminalization of such activities that made it illegal to "appear in public in a dress not belonging to his or her sex" and corrupt urban police precincts strategically setting aside the Tenderloin and the district's buffer area as the only areas that would tolerate such behavior.¹³ As a result, transgender individuals, or others who may have fallen within the gender-variant or cross-dressing categories, often associated themselves or ended up within the red-light districts of towns and cities. The criminalization of gender-variant individuals continued through the first half of the 20th century into the 1960s when the Compton's Cafeteria riot occurred.

By the 1960s, the corner of Turk and Taylor was recognized as the center of the transgender red-light district, consisting of primarily transfeminine individuals. Tamara Ching, a member of the sex working industry during the 60s, recalls "transgender street sex-work as being policed into a

⁷ "Mindy's Kosher Korner," *San Francisco Examiner*, November 18, 1947; "Zazel Has Returned," *San Francisco Examiner*, November 21, 1915.

⁸ "Housing at Hyland?" *Tenderloin Times*, April 1986.

⁹ "Turk Corner Taylor Hotel," *San Francisco Examiner*, March 12, 1908; "Hotel Chapin," *San Francisco Examiner*, January 6, 1921; "Hotel Rford," *San Francisco Examiner*, June 17, 1925.

¹⁰ Susan Stryker, "At the Crossroads of Turk and Taylor," *Places Journal* (October 2021), <https://doi.org/10.22269/211013>.

¹¹ Randy Shaw, *The Tenderloin: Sex, Crime, and Resistance in the Heart of San Francisco* (San Francisco: Urban Reality Press, 2015), 68-69.

¹² Stryker, "At the Crossroads;" Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 76-7.

¹³ Sears, *Arresting Dress*, 97.

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nine-block area bounded by Turk, O'Farrell, Mason, and Leavenworth Streets."¹⁴ The area held the only housing options that permitted renting to the estimated six hundred transgender individuals within the Tenderloin, such as the El Rosa, the Bijou, and the single occupancy rooms above Compton's Cafeteria itself (by then known as the Hyland Hotel).¹⁵ Amanda St. Jaymes, a leading trans activist in the 1960s, recalls, "Turk Street was our street, and the buildings that were on it, the hotels, that's where we lived, that was our home. We had no other place to go."¹⁶

Harassment of the Transgender and Gay Communities in the Tenderloin

The atypical activities of the Tenderloin and the transgender ghetto attracted elevated attention and abuse by vice patrols and vagrancy police.¹⁷ Many of the dive establishments in the Tenderloin catered to the gender-variant community along with their allies, slum tourists, and other thrill-seekers. The discrimination within the job market for transgender women also created issues with the law as many turned to the only reliable option of sex work. Many chose this profession, but there were many others that could not find jobs in any other industries, forcing them into sex work. This line of work also created other spaces for hate crimes and violence against the transgender community. In an effort to strike down the many vices of the neighborhood, especially where various races and gender expressions were present, these businesses and street workers were constant targets of police raids and harassment by law enforcement.¹⁸ Police Chief Thomas Cahill told the press, "This whole area has been a great police problem for some time. These are not just sick people. It's not as simple as that. They are dangerous men with criminal records."¹⁹

Treatment after arrest within jails and prisons was especially abusive for transgender individuals. Several firsthand accounts reflect this behavior. Judy, a leader within the short-lived transgender support group, Conversion our Goal, remembers an instance where she was placed in police custody:

I was made on a misdemeanor charge to strip down in a tank-type cell and be searched in front of 14 other people and laughed at and made fun of. Then I was taken back into a cell and into a tank that is strictly for the homosexual or transvestites, transsexual type people and put in

¹⁴ *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria*, directed by Victor Silverman and Susan Stryker (Independent Television Services, 2005), 16:59-17:24, Amazon Prime.

¹⁵ "Drag Queens Protest Tenderloin Housing Pinch," *San Francisco Examiner*, September 7, 1973.

¹⁶ Amanda St. Jaymes interview, Screaming Queens collection (2008-35), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

¹⁷ The 1961 Tay-Bush Inn raid, the 1965 Mardi Gras Ball Raid at California Hall, and the Chuckker Club raid in 1965 are all examples of such abuse; John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed., 1998), 184, 193-4.

¹⁸ "Queens Liberation Alliance," *Gay Pride Quarterly* 3 (Winter, 1973): 10.

¹⁹ "Biggest S.F. Raid on Homosexuals," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 12, 1965.

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there on a mattress with no cover on it no blanket and stated, 'stay there.' I did not make a phone call. I made one and it was incomplete, and I wasn't allowed another phone call for 24 hours. And then I had to pay for the phone call on a public phone myself. I was treated very, very poorly.²⁰

She also recalls the usual instance of officers confiscating hormone medication while incarcerated or in custody stating, "They give drunks medication to keep them from going into DTs [alcohol withdrawal]. Yet we have our pills with us when we're arrested, yet they take them away from us and will not give them to us."²¹ Many others experienced similar issues among police enforcement throughout the first half of the 20th century, viewing the discrimination and police abuse as a cooperative effort to oppress the gender-variant community.

This threat of incarceration and thus police harassment was only heightened by economic disparities among tenderloin residents and the recent influx of new residents that continued to stress the district's resources. This is to say that "trans people were specifically targeted by police, yet the violence they experienced arose from the multidimensional workings of a carceral power that targeted other populations as well."²² The relationships between not only the transgender community but also those who struggled with poverty are important elements to consider in the united effort that took place at Compton's Cafeteria in 1966.

One such organization founded on these intersectional principles, proving to be an asset and inciter to the events at Compton's, is Vanguard. Established in July of 1966 in the Tenderloin district, Vanguard was the earliest known organization to help queer youth in the United States. Many of its members were gay and transgender individuals of the unhoused community and worked as street-based sex workers. They focused on active resistance efforts to protest the unequal treatment of sexuality and gender minorities, especially the disparities within economic standing and state-sponsored violence.²³

Vanguard also created support services for struggling individuals.²⁴ Their focus on the issues facing gay and trans youth "produced radical insights into the connections between economic class, police violence, incarceration, and homophobia."²⁵ This new collective awareness created a strong

²⁰ "Cops and Robbers II: Transsexuals and the Police," Pacifica Radio Archives, American Archive of Public Broadcasting (GBH and the Library of Congress), Boston, MA and Washington, DC, <http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-28-g44hm52x2x>.

²¹ "Cops and Robbers II: Transsexuals and the Police."

²² Stryker, "At the Crossroads."

²³ Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith, *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex* (Edinburgh, Scotland: AK Press, 2015), 40-45.

²⁴ Stanley and Smith, *Captive Genders*, 37.

²⁵ Stanley and Smith, *Captive Genders*, 35.

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sense of identity among those involved in the organization moving forward, which assisted with a more radical understanding of class and gender examination.²⁶ Considering this group's involvement with the mistreatment at Compton's Cafeteria helps illustrate the organized nature of the riot itself, rather than as a spur-of-the-moment act of rebellion.

Compton's Cafeteria

The former Mindy's Kosher Korner became the newest location of the local franchise, Gene Compton's Cafeteria, by the early 1950s. This particular branch at the crossroads of Turk and Taylor, centered in San Francisco's transgender ghetto and sex-work district, reflected the location of their customer base. With a combination of cheap food, all-night hours, ample seating, and the centralized location in the Tenderloin, Compton's Cafeteria became the "largest watering hole in the 'Neon Sex Jungle.'"²⁷ Felicia Elizondo, an often visitor to the diner in the 60s, remembers it as "the place to show off new outfits and boyfriends, and to splurge on big meals after a night's work."²⁸ Also, the restaurant did not serve alcohol, attracting younger people and those who were not accurately represented on their IDs. But it also served as a base for nights out, with many people starting and ending their evenings at Compton's. The well-lit environment of the diner provided a comfortable refuge for trans women that lived and worked throughout the neighborhood.²⁹

Harold O'Neal, an acquaintance of the franchise's original owner, Eugene Compton, recalls hearing that the tenderloin location was always the chain's "problem child."³⁰ Herb Cain of the San Francisco Chronicle wrote:

The Compton's Cafeteria at Turk and Taylor, which had been an open-'round-the-clock spot since the year '01, now closes at 9:30 p.m., on acct. too many Weird Ones were hanging out there in the wee hours. This, plus seven or eight police cars parked at the curb to keep an eye on the Strangelings, made Boss Irving Compton figure it was time for a change.³¹

After the death of Eugene, his son and the new leader of the cafeterias, Irving Compton, experimented with adjusting the diner's hours to close early in an attempt to rid the establishment of the gender-variant community. He also hired security to harass loiterers outside of the

²⁶ Stanley and Smith, *Captive Genders*, 44.

²⁷ Stryker, "At the Crossroads."

²⁸ Felicia Elizondo interview, Screaming Queens collection (2008-35), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

²⁹ Nicole Pasulka, "Ladies In The Streets: Before Stonewall, Transgender Uprising Changed Lives," National Public Radio, May 5, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/05/05/404459634/ladies-in-the-streets-before-stonewall-transgender-uprising-changed-lives>.

³⁰ Personal communication with Susan Stryker (Summer, 2001), quoted in Stryker, "At the Crossroads."

³¹ Herb Caen, "Items for Sale," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 16, 1964.

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restaurant. Employees and managers regularly called police to escort transgender and gay individuals, among them sex workers and the unhoused, out of their business. They also eventually instituted a "service charge" to make up for the income lost on those who camped out at tables, nursing their singular cups of coffee.³² However, this did not prevent the popularity of the diner with the gender-variant community and any other people the mainstream might have noted as 'questionable.'³³ The early closing time eventually ended, continuing all-night service once again within a few years.

After the hostile treatment at Compton's Cafeteria began, Vanguard took to their first organized action with a two-hour picket of the diner on July 18, 1966, protesting the discriminatory action against transfeminine patrons of the restaurant.³⁴ Caen with the *San Francisco Chronicle* once again regarded the tense environment at the corner of Turk and Taylor and wrote "Compton's, the all-night Cafeteria at Turk and Taylor, is now being picketed by some of the weirdniks who've been roused by the tough Pinkertons on duty there. If you've never dug the Tenderloin types who generally hang out there after midnight, you're missing one of the Sights of the City. Positively Eerie."³⁵ While this picket did not result in any direct action, it did continue to build the youths' collective injury and treatment by the restaurant owners, their new security, and the police. The lack of results caused frustration that eventually boiled over into the militant act of resistance starting inside the cafeteria a month later.³⁶

Compton's Cafeteria Riot

In another routine raid on a weekend night in August 1966, the police entered Compton's Cafeteria to remove transgender individuals, drag queens, and sex workers after the manager reported them as loiterers in the diner.³⁷ A policeman dragging one of the queens out of the restaurant became aggressive after resisting arrest, which resulted in the individual throwing a cup of coffee in the officer's face. Chaos ensued with the woman's friends joining in, throwing plates, cups, and silverware at other officers, who then ran outside to call for backup. They chased the police out of the diner, flipping tables and breaking the diner's plate-glass windows. The fighting continued into the streets around the establishment, where paddy wagons arrived to arrest the transgender and gay rioters. Drag queens and transfeminine individuals beat the police with their purposely weighted

³² Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2017), 72-3; "Young Rejects Form Own Organization," *Cruise News & World Report* 2 no. 7 (July, 1966): 1; "Young Homos Picket Compton's Restaurant," *Cruise News & World Report* 2 no. 8 (August 1966): 1.

³³ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 64.

³⁴ July 25, 1966 letter to parents, Ed Hansen papers, (1998-37), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

³⁵ Herb Caen, "Light Summer Reading," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 20, 1966.

³⁶ Stanley and Smith, *Captive Genders*, 41.

³⁷ The exact date of the event is unknown due to the disappearance of police records and lack of acknowledgement by both mainstream and LGBTQ press.

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purses/makeshift emergency weapons and kicked them with their heeled shoes. Over two hundred individuals participated in the resistance, leaving a police car vandalized and a newspaper stand burned to the ground.

Gay liberation activist Reverend Raymond Broshears recalls, "general havoc was raised that night in the Tenderloin."³⁸ Vanguard was heavily involved in the militant action, scheduling a picket the following night in response to the reaction from the restaurant managers to ban gender-variant individuals from Compton's. This developed into another riot-like atmosphere, resulting in the newly replaced plate-glass diner windows being smashed once again. The second protest was attended by a broader demographic within the Tenderloin, including allies and other members of the LGBTQ community. Amanda St. Jaymes noted, "there was a lot of joy after it happened. A lot of them went to jail, but there was a lot of, 'I really don't give a damn, and this is what needs to happen."³⁹

101-121 Taylor Street After Compton's Cafeteria

With the restaurant's popularity dwindling following the riot, Compton's Cafeteria closed its doors in August 1972.⁴⁰ The next and last business to occupy the storefront was Frenchy's K+T Adult Book Store, which sold an array of print pornography on top of running coin-operated "fantasy booths" and a "Topless Change Girl."⁴¹ After filing for bankruptcy in 1985, the storefront, as well as the dilapidated hotel that occupied the upper floors, sat vacant.

Impact of the Compton's Cafeteria Riot

The Compton's Cafeteria riot had immediate and long-term effects on the local and country-wide LGBTQ rights movement.⁴³ This riot "marked the first violent, collective protest against harassment in the transgender/queer community"⁴⁴ Besides the picket the following night, several

³⁸ Raymond Broshears, "History of Christopher Street West — San Francisco," printed in the program for "Christopher Street West: San Francisco March and Rally" (June 25, 1972).

³⁹ Amanda St. Jaymes interview, Screaming Queens collection.

⁴⁰ Herb Caen, "The Herbaceous Boarder," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 31, 1972.

⁴¹ Carol Pogash and Phil Bronstein, "Selling Sex," *San Francisco Examiner*, June 2, 1982, <https://sfexaminer.newspapers.com/image/460673874/?terms=%22Selling%20Sex%22&match=1>.

⁴² "Who We Are," The Geo Group, Inc., accessed April 20, 2022, https://www.geogroup.com/who_we_are; Casey Tolan, "Prison Company Known for Scandals Opens New S.F. Facility," *SF Weekly*, December 21, 2016, <https://www.sfweekly.com/news/news-news/prison-company-known-scandals-opens-new-s-f-facility/>.

⁴³ "SF Compton's Cafeteria Closing," *Miami Herald*, October 5, 1972.

⁴⁴ Stanley and Smith, *Captive Genders*, 41.

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other militant protests and actions occurred as a result of the Compton's Cafeteria Riot. For instance, the Vanguard "Street Sweep," where a large group of Tenderloin youth walked the neighborhood with brooms in hand, served as a tongue-in-cheek protest of the constant police sweeps of the district.⁴⁵

Vanguard Magazine continued publishing with a particular interest in providing specific resources to the LGBTQ community, especially transgender people, and the actions one could take to ensure future success for people like themselves. For example, they provided a hotline to report incidents of police harassment and implored their readers to submit the names of businesses that discriminated against those who were not gender-normative presenting.⁴⁶ Through the broad circulation of legal information and increasing attention to the mistreatment of queer youth, Vanguard served as an important vessel in "creating and shaping the new political consciousness that both gave rise to and coalesced around the [Compton's Cafeteria] riot."⁴⁷ The new organization quickly abetted the collective identity of young LGBTQ people, allowing them to see themselves as part of a group, which only continued to grow after igniting the flame at Compton's.

The violent resistance tactic that began at Compton's Cafeteria became a crucial tool fostering visibility and awareness of queer rights campaigns across the country. This specific incident at the corner of Turk and Taylor was the turning point for the militant movement not only throughout San Francisco but also throughout the nation. It helped pave the way for future notable moments of LGBTQ resistance, such as Stonewall in New York, making it significant within the narrative of civil disobedience and protests that led to the queer community's future political victories.⁴⁸

A few other militant actions for LGBTQ rights against the police took place before Compton's Cafeteria, such as the incidents at Cooper's Donuts and Dewey's Lunch Counter, but Compton's was the first to result in lasting institutional change within the community because of transgender and gay individuals' actions. Also, its somewhat planned nature made it an organized effort against carceral power and the discrimination of queer people with the participation of members of well-known queer militant groups like Vanguard, which was unlike even that of the future Stonewall riots.⁴⁹

Several advances within the transgender movement resulted in the months following the Compton's Cafeteria riots. Partnerships were formed between allies of the transgender population

⁴⁵ "Sweep In," *Vanguard Magazine* 1 no. 2 (October 1966), 4, GLBT Historical Society periodicals collection (GLBT-PER), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

⁴⁶ J.P. Marat, "President's Page," *Vanguard Magazine* 1 no. 2, (October 1966), 2, GLBT Historical Society periodicals collection (GLBT-PER), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

⁴⁷ Stanley and Smith, *Captive Genders*, 43.

⁴⁸ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 73.

⁴⁹ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 73.

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to promote access to transitioning and safety efforts for transgender people. Dr. Harry Benjamin, the United States' leading medical expert on transsexuality, was one of those important contacts. His book, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966), named and described transsexuality as a completely unique case, different from cross-dressing individuals. This was the first step towards advocating for transgender people's own decisions with their minds and bodies, including wider acknowledgment of sex-change surgeries and their overall mental and physical medical care.⁵⁰

Sergeant Elliot Blackstone, San Francisco's first liaison officer with the homophile community, was present at the Compton's Cafeteria riot, attempting to diffuse the situation between the police and the resisters. Shortly after the event and after meeting people who identified as transsexual for the first time, he read Benjamin's book, becoming an advocate for transgender people on top of sexually variant individuals. Blackstone partnered with the Tenderloin transgender community to create safer circumstances around police. In his position, he pushed for access to hormones, counseling, and medical referrals from the Department of Public Health's Center for Special Problems. One of the most crucial of these services was administering ID cards for transgender patients so they could obtain legal jobs and open bank accounts.⁵¹ He also held lectures and organized joint events with police officers and transgender people in an effort to humanize the gender-variant community in the eyes of the officers.⁵²

Several activists from the Center for Special Problems unit began holding meetings at the Glide Memorial Church, eventually branching out to become its own organization and the first transgender peer support group, Conversion Our Goal (COG). Blackstone attended these meetings frequently, even coming up with the group's name.⁵³ COG created an extended network of resources and services for transgender people to build practical skills on transitioning and living life after transitioning, as well as building a sense of community.⁵⁴ It also published the COG Newsletter, alerting readers to additional support group meetings, hormone medication access, psychological care, and surgery referrals at the newly established Stanford University Medical School sex change clinic.⁵⁵ On top of providing help to transgender individuals, they also aimed to educate the public through exposure to these unfamiliar concepts of gender so that they could understand the positions of gender-variant people. COG believed that if they were able to show the public that transgender people posed no threat to others, the medical, legal, and law

⁵⁰ Barry Reay, "The Transsexual Phenomenon: A Counter-History," *Journal of Social History* 47 no. 4 (Summer 2014): 1042, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shu018>.

⁵¹ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 76.

⁵² Susan Stryker, "Elliot Blackstone Interview Transcript," Oral History, 1996, 49, Digital Transgender Archive, 24, <https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/gx41mj01k>.

⁵³ Stryker, "Elliot Blackstone Interview Transcript," 5.

⁵⁴ Stryker, "Elliot Blackstone Interview Transcript," 24.

⁵⁵ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 76. "Cops and Robbers II: Transsexuals and the Police."

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enforcement fields would follow with new policies and updated laws.⁵⁶ This organization would not have come to fruition when it did without the initial exposure of transgender individuals from the Compton's Cafeteria riot opening conversations on how better to serve their community.

While COG split apart and eventually dissipated within a year of its founding, other grassroots organizations followed, such as the National Transsexual Counseling Unit (NTCU), which later transformed into the Transexual Counseling Service.⁵⁷ Reed Erickson, a transgender male, provided much of the funding for NTCU after its founding in 1968. After inheriting his father's business, Erickson became a long-time philanthropist with a personal fortune of over forty million dollars. He established several organizations to improve the visibility and awareness of transgender people before the Compton's Cafeteria riot, such as the Erikson Education Foundation (EEF). He even backed Dr. Benjamin's research for *The Transsexual Phenomena*. EEF funded the NTCU endeavor, which provided necessary "medical, psychiatric, vocational, social, or legal assistance" to anyone experiencing gender identity struggles or identified as transgender.⁵⁸ The aspirations of care and service for the transgender community culminated in the NTCU following the riot.

The Central City Anti-Poverty Program Office opened that fall as a result of the Tenderloin neighborhood organizing campaign and with help from Blackstone. They offered additional skills to transgender people who did not want to be sex workers, such as the Neighborhood Youth Corps programs, which provided clerical training and experience. This was yet another vital resource that became available to the gender-nonconforming community as a result of the Compton's Cafeteria Riot. The widespread exposure of the transgender community ensuing after the riot is responsible for many foundational organizations and programs that supported this community.

Remembering the Compton's Cafeteria Riot

Today, Compton's Cafeteria is remembered within the transgender community in San Francisco as well as throughout the country. The building that once housed the restaurant now serves as the center of the first legally recognized Transgender District in the world, entitled Compton's Transgender Cultural District, after the riot. The district is meant to "celebrate the lives, resilience, and presence of transgender people." The city was also the first to recognize the month of August as transgender history month during the 55th anniversary of the Compton's Cafeteria riot that took place that same month.⁵⁹ The Tenderloin Museum holds a permanent exhibition dedicated to the

⁵⁶ "Cops and Robbers II: Transsexuals and the Police."

⁵⁷ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 78.

⁵⁸ "T'Sexual Unit," *Berkley Barb*, 1971, Digital Transgender Archive, <https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/c821gj795>.

⁵⁹ Office of the Mayor, "Mayor London Breed Declares August as Transgender History Month in San Francisco," August 24, 2021, <https://sfmayor.org/article/mayor-london-breed-declares-august-transgender-history-month-san-francisco>.

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riot and produced an immersive live reenactment of the event in the format of a play performed in 2018.⁶⁰ Several memorial plaques on the sidewalk provide a brief interpretation of the events that unfolded on the street corner. These tangible elements of remembrance recall the riot participants as heroes and inciters of the LGBTQ civil rights movement.⁶¹ In front of the former Compton's Cafeteria building, the street remains a gathering place for protests and days of remembrance for the queer community.⁶²

Criterion A Justification

LGBTQ history before Stonewall previously centered around the homophile movement, where gay men were careful not to make waves in society to assimilate into heterosexual culture. They were already seen as too intertwined with the 'establishment.' So, the aggressive physical action of the Compton's Cafeteria riot shifted the fight to militancy that involved a wider net of queer people, including the gender-variant community who had been excluded from homophile groups in the past.⁶³ The event also enhanced the "political clout" of the LGBTQ community more than ever before, resulting in the quick draw of new funding and resources to the Tenderloin, the newly deemed center of the LGBTQ rights movement.⁶⁴ The influx of programs, organizations, and resources within San Francisco following the resistance at Compton's also resulted in the community addressing the intertwined relationship between poverty and nonnormative queerness. The marginalization by class, race, and gender presented among the rioters helps confirm that the Compton's Cafeteria riot was not an isolated incident but rather a progression in the country's political, social, and economic concerns.⁶⁵ It did not take long for similar organizations and actions to sprout throughout the country, especially in New York City, where the next major act of militance in the fight for transgender rights occurred.⁶⁶

The riot's young gay and transgender participants laid the groundwork for future militancy within the LGBTQ community three years before the conflict at the Stonewall Inn, the previously

⁶⁰ Ryan Kost, "A Little Known, Vital Movement in LGBTQ History: SF Diner Riot Lives Again Onstage," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 26, 2018, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/performance/article/A-little-known-vital-moment-in-LGBT-history-SF-12710507.php>.

⁶¹ The memorial plaques were visited by the author on January 12, 2022.

⁶² J.D. Morris, "More Handwringing Over Proposed S.F. Redistricting Map with the Tenderloin and SoMa Upset Over Possible Split," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 30, 2022, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/More-handwringing-over-proposed-S-F-17046814.php>; "Black Trans Lives Matter' Mural at Compton's Cafeteria Riot Site for 54th Anniversary," *San Francisco Bay Times*, <http://sfbaytimes.com/black-trans-lives-matter-mural-at-comptons-cafeteria-riot-site-for-54th-anniversary/>.

⁶³ Shaw, *The Tenderloin*, 117.

⁶⁴ Shaw, *The Tenderloin*, 118.

⁶⁵ Pasulka, "Ladies in the Streets."

⁶⁶ One such organization prior to the Stonewall Riot in New York was Labyrinth, established in 1968, specifically transgender men; Mario Martino, *Emergence: A Transsexual Autobiography* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1977), 232.

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recognized beginning of the LGBTQ civil rights movement. Previous interpretations of the LGBTQ civil rights history established Stonewall as the isolated beginning of the aggressive campaign for equality. Bringing acknowledgment to Compton's Cafeteria creates additional context in understanding the buildup of collective consciousness in the queer community before the Stonewall riot.

The event showed the queer community's willingness to fight their oppression to the degree of physical altercations and action. While it may not have had the immediate and widespread response as the Stonewall riots, it did change the tone of the movement. The Compton's Cafeteria riot did not fix the systematic transphobia among law enforcement, but it created an opening for society to view the transgender community in a different light. It began to bridge the gap between the mainstream public's usual opinion of seeing gender-variant individuals as the 'other,' humanizing them as part of the general public and seeing their needs as legitimate. This provided an essential steppingstone within the transgender social justice movement, making 101-121 Taylor eligible under criterion A for its connection to the Compton's Cafeteria riot.

Comparative Analysis: Properties Associated with the LGBTQ Civil Rights Movement

Compton's Cafeteria occupies a distinctive role at the beginning of the American LGBTQ Civil Rights movement. Several other properties are associated with early acts of protest for gay rights, such as New York City's Stonewall and Los Angeles' Black Cat Tavern. However, many of these remain locally/regionally significant or occurred after the Compton's Cafeteria riot.

Stonewall, New York, NY (National Historic Landmark): Stonewall is regarded as “the single most important event that led to the modern gay and lesbian liberation movement and the struggle for civil rights for gay and lesbian Americans.”¹ On June 28th, 1969, the gay bar patrons of the Stonewall Inn, fed up with constant police raids on LGBTQ establishments, decided to fight back. This buildup of frustration and anger finally boiled over into a spontaneous act of militancy, with observers throwing various objects such as beer cans and pennies at the police. The uprising continued for days before coming to a head on the night of July 2nd, where the violence spread throughout the adjoining streets reaching several thousand participants. While this was undoubtedly the most notorious early protest for gay rights, it occurred three years after the riots at Compton's Cafeteria. Also, the riot in San Francisco was loosely planned by local transgender and gay youths through Vanguard, while Stonewall was more of an impromptu act, making Compton's Cafeteria significant in the realm of organized action.

Black Cat Tavern, Los Angeles, CA (California Historic Landmark): Other properties are associated with the beginnings of this civil rights movement before the Stonewall uprising, such

¹ David Carter, Andrew Scott Dolkart, Gale Harris and Jay Shockley, “Stonewall,” National Historic Landmark Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1999), Section 8.

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as the Black Cat Tavern. After an undercover police raid at the gay bar on New Year's Eve, two new California gay rights groups, Personal Rights in Defense and Education (PRIDE) and the Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile (SCCRH), organized a demonstration in the parking lot of the business on February 11, 1967. This was one of the first coordinated efforts to protest the treatment of the LGBTQ community by the police. Compton's Cafeteria is often cited as a precursor to the demonstration at Black Cat Tavern, with the California Historic Landmark nomination stating that the riot "set the stage" for this later planned effort. The Black Cat Tavern remains significant on a regional level.

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American Archive of Public Broadcasting

Digital Transgender Archive

The GLBT Historical Society Digital Collections

Newspapers.com

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: GLBT Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 34,500 square feet

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.783356 Longitude: -122.411049
2. UTM: Easting: 551860 Northing: 4181941

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property is bounded by the sidewalk on Turk Street to the south, a building at 116 Turk Street to the west, a building at 141 Taylor Street to the north, and the sidewalk on Taylor Street to the east.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property boundaries coincide with the building parcel number.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Madison Levesque
organization: California State University, Sacramento, Public History
street & number: 2514 Q St, Apt 9
city or town: Sacramento state: CA zip code: 95816
e-mail madisonmlevesque@gmail.com
telephone: (858) 472-9206
date: April 2022

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The documentation of Compton's Cafeteria would not be possible if it weren't for the research efforts of Dr. Susan Stryker, who has worked diligently to organize and preserve this story. Much of the historic context is based on her contributions to the history of the event.

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

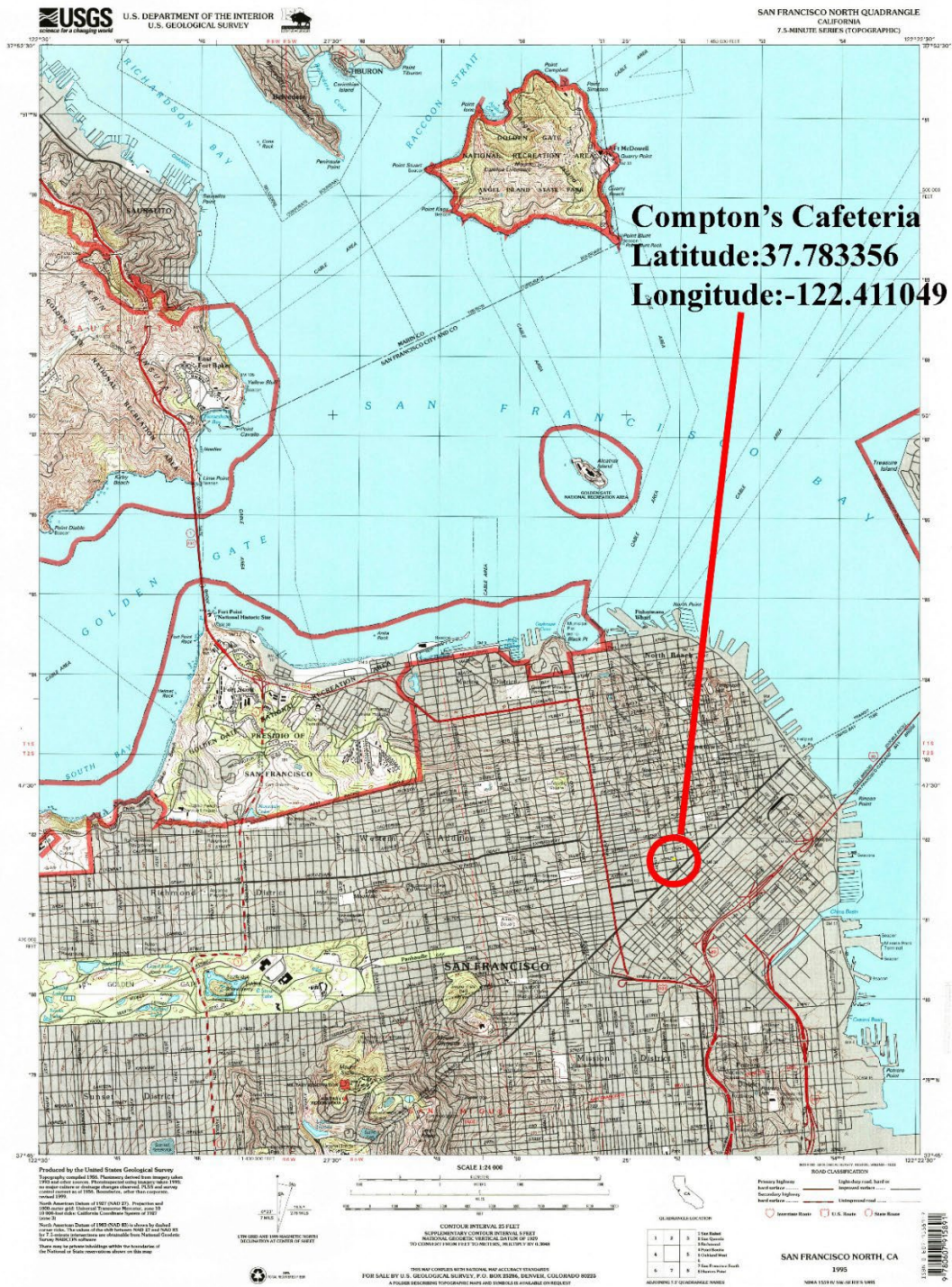
- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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USGS Map

USGS 7.5 Series Topographic Map, San Francisco County, San Francisco North Quadrangle
 Compton's Cafeteria indicated by red circle.



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Additional Figures



The only known image of 101-121 Taylor Street with the Compton's Cafeteria signage after a fire at the Hyland Hotel located above the diner, c. 1970s (courtesy of Clay Geerdes and David Miller)

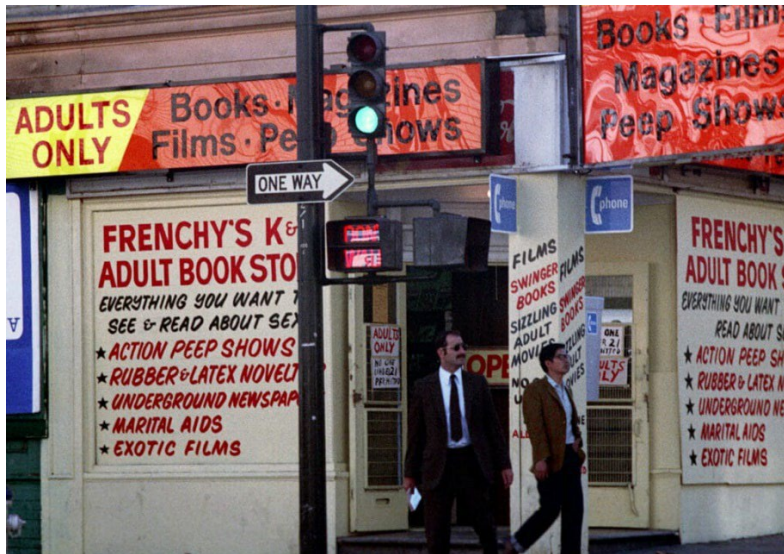


Members of Vanguard posing at the street sweep demonstration, 1966 (GLBT Historical Society).⁶⁷

⁶⁷Vanguard 1966 Street Sweep photographs. Collection Number: 2021-21. GLBT Historical Society.

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Frenchy's K&T Adult Book Store front entrance, 1971 (Courtesy of Nick DeWolf).



Figure 1: Compton's Cafeteria exterior prior to Geo Group ownership, c. 2001⁶⁸

⁶⁸ *Abbreviated Institutional Master Plan: Haight Ashbury Free Clinics, Inc.*, Haight Ashbury Free Clinics, Inc., July 2006, 58, https://sfplanning.org/sites/default/files/za/Haight%20Ashbury%20Free%20Clinics_2006_11_02.pdf.

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Gene Compton's Cafeteria

City or Vicinity: San Francisco

County: San Francisco County State: California

Photographer: Madison Levesque

Date Photographed: January 12, 2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 9 (CA_San Francisco County_Compton's Cafeteria_0001). South and East facades looking northwest.

2 of 9 (CA_San Francisco County_Compton's Cafeteria_0002). South façade looking north.

3 of 9 (CA_San Francisco County_Compton's Cafeteria_0003). East façade looking northwest.

4 of 9 (CA_San Francisco County_Compton's Cafeteria_0004). East façade looking west.

5 of 9 (CA_San Francisco County_Compton's Cafeteria_0005). Southeast building corner looking northwest, close-up of ground-floor.

6 of 9 (CA_San Francisco County_Compton's Cafeteria_0006). Ground-floor windows on South façade, looking northwest.

7 of 9 (CA_San Francisco County_Compton's Cafeteria_0007). Ground-floor windows and door on East façade, looking southwest.

8 of 9 (CA_San Francisco County_Compton's Cafeteria_0008). "Gene Compton's Cafeteria Riot 1966" memorial plaque dedicated June 22, 2006.

9 of 9 (CA_San Francisco County_Compton's Cafeteria_0009). "Uptown Tenderloin Lost Landmarks: Compton's Cafeteria Riot" memorial plaque.

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NPS Form 10-900

OMB Control No. 1024-0018

Compton's Cafeteria

San Francisco County, CA

Name of Property

County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 8052